



THE JEWS WHO TURNED INTO APES

It is narrated that seventy thousand men from the people of Hazrat Dawood (Alaihis Salaam) used to live in the sea-side village of Eelah, near Uqbah. These people were living a luxurious and prosperous life. Allah Ta'ala tested them by way of prohibiting them from fishing on Saturday (the day of Sabbath) and permitted them to catch fish on all other days of the week. He tested their faith by way of making many fish appear during the day of Sabbath and making none appear during other days.

However, upon listening to the whispers of Shaitaan, they began to dig drains from the sea to the land, resulting in the formation of ponds on the dry land. Shaitaan further misguided them by giving them the evil idea that on the day of Sabbath (Saturday), when fish come into the pond through these drains, they must close the passage of the drains and not catch the fish on that day. Instead, they must capture them with ease the next day.

They liked this evil idea but they did not realise the fact that the day they trapped the fish in the ponds, that was considered to be the day the fish were caught. Therefore, capturing fish turned out to be on the day of Sabbath (Saturday) which Allah Ta'ala had prohibited them to do. On this occasion, the Jews divided into three groups:

1. There were some who restrained themselves from fishing according to the command of Allah Ta'ala, and attempted to tell others to do the same. They showed anger and hatred towards this disobedient act.
2. Another group disliked and hated this act but remained silent. They did not restrain people from indulging in it. Instead, they questioned those who tried to stop people from this evil act, as to why they advised such people that Allah Ta'ala is either about to destroy them or is going to inflict His severe torment upon them.
3. There were also some insolent and disobedient people who openly opposed the commandment of Allah Ta'ala by following the evil temptation of Shaitaan by fishing on Saturday. They ate as well as sold those fish.

When the disobedient people did not refrain from their evil act despite being forbidden from it, then those who attempted to stop them said that they would no longer keep any ties with them. Therefore, they built a wall to separate themselves from the wrongdoers. The village was divided and separate entrances and exits were made. Wrathfully, Hazrat Dawood (Alaihis Salaam) cursed the hunters. Consequently, no one among the disobedient people came outside the next day.

Some people climbed up the wall to see them and saw that all of them were deformed and turned into apes. When people entered by opening the doors of the wrongdoers, the apes would recognise their relatives, come close to them, sniff their clothes and weep bitterly. But people would not recognise the ones turned into apes. Those who became apes were twelve thousand in number. They lived for three days and could not eat or drink anything and all of them died of starvation and thirst.

The group of people who restrained from fishing remained safe from annihilation. And the correct opinion is that Allah Ta'ala also saved those from this annihilation who considered it evil in their hearts but remained silent. [*Tafseer Saawi*]

The Holy Qur'an describes this incident in detail in the following verse of Surah Baqarah, "And you certainly know of those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of Sabth (Sabbath - Saturday) - We therefore said to them, "Become apes, despised!" [Surah 2, Verse 65]. This event is also mentioned in detail in Surah A'raaf in the following verses, "And ask them of the township that was by the sea; when they used to exceed in the matter of the Sabbath - when their fish used to come swimming in the water in front of them on the day of Sabbath, and not come on the days it was not Sabbath; this is how We used to test them, due to their disobedience. And when a group among them said, "Why do you preach to a people whom Allah is going to destroy or mete out a severe punishment?" They said, "To have an excuse before your Rabb, and that perhaps they may fear." And when they forgot the advices they had been given, We rescued those who forbade evil, and seized the unjust with a dreadful torment, the recompense for their disobedience. Consequently when they rebelled against the command to refrain, We said to them, "Be apes, despised!" [Surah 7, Verses 163-166]

We learn from this how dangerous it is to disobey the commands of Allah Ta'ala and fall into the trap of Shaitaan. Furthermore, we learn how wretched those individuals are who are cursed by a Prophet of Allah. Their signs get wiped away from the face of the earth by getting caught in the punishment of Allah Ta'ala, they become fuel of the Hellfire and become despised in both the worlds. There are many lessons that every Muslim can derive from this heart-trembling incident of the people of Eelah. May the fear of Allah Ta'ala thrive in the hearts of Muslims after reading this, may it give them the enthusiasm to stay away from evil temptations, remain steadfast upon the straight path and become successful in both the worlds by attaining honour and respect.

May Allah Ta'ala grant us the Taufeeq to seek knowledge and to understand the message and teachings of the Holy Qur'an, Ameen.

[Compiled from Aja'ibul Qur'an Ma' Ghara'ibul Qur'an by Shaikh-ul-Hadith Hazrat Allamah Abdul Mustafa A'zami Rahmatullah Alaih]